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AUTHOR	Adams, Gina C.; Poersch, Nicole Oxendine
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ABSTRACT

This briefing book from the Children's Defense Fund contains factsheets on child care and early education issues. Areas covered include basic facts about early childhood education and care; their importance to children, families, and communities; some of the challenges facing families who need day care; and key child care and early education policies and programs. The book is organized into three parts. Part 1, which contains nine sections, presents basic facts on child care and early education, the importance of good-quality care and its role in helping low-income working families, the inadequacy of the supply of care, and three groups that face particular problems accessing good-quality care: low-income children, very young children, and school-age children. Quotes from parents and experts about the problems families face finding care conclude Part 1. Part 2, which contains five sections, covers the various programs and policies that help families access child care. This part begins with an overview of the roles played by federal, state, and local governments and the private sector. It then summarizes the 1996 welfare law's impact on child care and presents factsheets on Head Start, state prekindergarten initiatives, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Part 3, which contains 10 tables, provides state data on a variety of child care and early education issues, including maternal labor force participation, preschool participation rates of poor children, state rankings on financial commitment to child care, Head Start enrollment by race and ethnicity, and the number of children and programs participating in the CACFP. (EV)

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